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INSURGENCY IN 3 PROVINCES IN SOUTHERN PART OF THAILAND

by

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Thailand-IMS

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ABSTRACT

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Thailand has endured a serious insurgency problem in three of its southern provinces since 2001. Many people have been killed by shootings and bombings; the principle human targets include soldiers, policemen, teachers and monks. These incidents occur nearly every day. The main objective of the insurgency group is to separate and rule three provinces in southern Thailand. They are trying to turn their fight into a religious conflict and are attempting to widen the situation; their actions have been misunderstood in the international community, especially in the Islamic world. The Thai government doesn't know how the insurgency is organized, who the commander is, or who supports them.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine and analyze causes and effects of the ongoing insurgency. This will include the role of globalization and its effects on Thailand, the particular history of the three provinces involved in the revolt and its relationship to the causes of the insurgency, other factors that make the revolt more likely such as ethnic conflict, religion, poverty, crime, the policies of the Thai government towards the insurgency, and the chances for more effective policies in the future. The recent coup in Thailand may present the opportunity for a change in policy and I will conclude with some modest policy recommendations to address the root causes of the insurgency and to improve Thai counter-insurgency policies in the future.

INSURGENCY IN 3 PROVINCES IN SOUTHERN PART OF THAILAND

Thailand has a history of being a peaceful country. Thailand's conflict with neighboring Burma, the Ayutthaya Kingdom, in 1568, was a short war. After World War II, the world separated in two groups; democracy, led by the United States, and communism led by the USSR. Thailand's pro U.S. stance was evident in its support of U.S. action against the communists in Vietnam; during that period Thailand had a communist insurgency and viewed Vietnam as their threat, too. Since 09/11/2001 Thailand continues to be pro U.S. and supports the global war of global counter-terrorism. Thailand began to face a serious problem from radical Muslims who wants to divide or separate Thailand and set up a new country and self-rule. This is a big problem in Thailand, and solving it will take a long time. The Thai government doesn't know who is enemy is, where their installations are located, who supports the separatist group, nor how organizes.

A major attack occurred in January 2004 when the separatist group raided an Army depot and stole several hundred weapons; a similar attack occurred on April 28, 2004 at the historic Kreu-Sae mosque. Since then, the Thai government sent in several thousand more police and soldiers to the South. Following these attacks, the Thai government had administration officials, military and police commanders changed, to include the minister of defense and the minister of interior. Now, the first priority of the armed forces became the operation in southern Thailand. The Thai government is trying to stop this bad situation with political and economic policies, but it's not yet successful. There is still an insurgency in area south of Thailand. The government was replaced by a military coup on September 2006. The situation remains serious.

What happened in southern Thailand? Globalization makes the world almost look like a small village. People can communicate everywhere in the world. It is easy to get new knowledge and information from the media, so things change very quickly. Democracy, environmental protection, human rights and free trade are new needs in world society. Most of the countries in the world are affected by globalization and Thailand is too.

Thailand has a population of 65 million; 95% Buddhist, 4 % Muslim, and 1% other. Most of the Muslims live in the three southern provinces¹. Thailand's major problem in the three southern provinces is that radical Islamic thinking spread quickly in Thailand. The members of separatist groups include: the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) coordinate, the BRN congress, and some information from an intelligence unit command that group coordinates actions with Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and Al Qaeda². The separatist group movement in Pattani has roots back

to the 1930s, but they couldn't succeed, because of the successful policies of the Thai government³.

Yet the violence escalated in recent years, especially following separatist groups have been in the area for a long time and with a military movement tried to overtake people by power and propaganda. In 2001, separatists group had attacked installations of police and military. Nineteen police were killed. They burned the symbols of Thai authority when they could. In 2002, separatist groups, armed with weapons on passing motorcycles, shot policemen and quickly escaped; fourteen policemen died in separate attacks, and 75 insurgents stole arms and ammunition from police stations. In 2003, shootings and bombings occurred 119 times⁴.

The Major Situation

A major event occurred on 4 January 2004. The separatist groups raided the Thai Army Depot of an Engineering Battalion in Narathiwat Province. The separatist groups had 100 insurgents, and executed a well planned and coordinated attack: they seized some 400 rifles, machine guns and pistols. The operation took about 30 minutes, killed 4 Buddhist guards (no Muslims), and before they withdrew they left a trail of nails and felled trees to block the road to prevent Thai military or policeman from following or counter-attacking them. In the same night time at about 1:30 am the separatist group burned 20 schools and attacked three police posts across eleven of Narathiwat's districts. At the same they burned the tires and left on the road in Yala province fake implosive charges attached to the bridges to prevent counter attacks and prevent support operations from military⁵. After this event, about ten days later, the police arrested 33 separatists; 5 of them are leaders, 3 were from GMIP (Gerakan Mujahhidin Islam Patani) and one from BRN.

The operation in 4 January is a classic separatist tactic employed since 1960s, in order to discredit the Thai government: the school burnings are designed for political and psychological impact, and killing the Buddhist guards because they want to make this a religious conflict and place a wedge of misunderstanding between Buddhists and Muslims. The government knows that BRN and GMIP were behind separatist operation.

BRN is a strong organization in Narathiwat. Both of them participated in several raids in 2002-2003 and have a history of organizing in religious schools. On 16 December 2004 police arrested three teachers all of them former colleagues at the Thamma Wittaya school. This school is not a public school, it teaches only Islamic religion. On 7 January 2005 police arrested another 3 religious teachers, also from Thamma Wittaya School, one from Pattana Islam, one from Wittayalai School and one with connections to the January 2004 attack. According to the

intelligence unit⁶, the attacks have been carried by a radical group begun in Yala and educated in Indonesia; they trained in jungle camps in Kelantan Malaysia, then returned to their villages and recruited the Ustadzes (religious teachers) to be the leadership.

These religious teachers are recruiting teenagers from the religious schools where they teach, grouping in small cells of 30-40 men. The cells are highly disciplined. They obey and are loyal to their leaders. They are required to take vows of silence on the group's membership activities or plans. The big event that occurred next on 27 April 2004, 22 men and teenagers came to Pattani's historic Krue Se Mosque and prayed together; they told the mosque's imam that they had come only to meditate. Around four hours later another group of about 20 arrived and joined the first group; at around 4:30 am on 28 April the leader of the group led prayer. When they finished they attacked the nearest security military and police checkpoint, leading to one policeman and one soldier killed. Army reinforcements come to help. The soldiers blockaded the mosque with a tank, and tried to pressure surrender, but the separatist group used the mosque's loudspeaker and repeatedly stated that they would fight to the death.

The stand-off took a long time. Soldiers fired tear gas in to the mosque. The separatist group returned fire with assault rifles and M-79 grenades launchers; two soldiers were shot dead. Outside, a crowd of over 1000 people gathered by 10:00 am and began growing increasingly agitated, while the separatist group located inside the mosque used the loudspeaker to call on them to rise up. The situation became critical because of pressure from the crowd of people pressured the military operation; because of this pressure, the military commander wanted to quickly resolve the crisis and warned the separatists group by loudspeaker to lay down arms and exit the mosque, but made no attempt to negotiate.

At 2:00 pm five teams of Special Forces troops were ordered to storm the mosque and shoot to kill. The separatist groups suffered 31 killed, ages between 17 and 63. Most of them were residents of Yala, Pattani, Songkhla and Naratiwat. On the same day had attacked another check point across Yala, Pattani and Songkla⁷. Ten small cells lightly armed with knives or machetes conducted attacks, with only attacks in Songkla had assaults using by pistols and hand grenades. On this day many of the confrontations took place in or near mosques; the end result was 105 separatists killed, the highest death toll in a single day for decades.

The events on 28 April 2004 were different from the 4 January raids on the depot because the raids on the depot were well planned and executed by well trained forces with a solid unity of command. In contrast, in the attacks on 28 April, the separatist groups used religion for symbolic value and did not have a good plan, nor were they well armed. The Ministry of

Defense insists the 28 April attacks were inspired and assisted by foreign Muslim radicals, implying Indonesian origin. The intelligence unit estimates that as many as 15,000 youth have been recruited as part of the separatist movement, and there about 500 hard core separatists led by BRN⁸; this movement began at least by 1992⁹. The young people are invited to join the movement for liberationist ideology. They have to undergo supoh¹⁰ ceremonies and have weapons and physical fitness training, most of them possess good discipline and each member is eventually expected to establish his own cell.

Another attack occurred on 25 October 2004 when 1,500 people came to protest outside a small police station in the town of Tak Bai, in southern Narathiwat. By 10:00 am they gathered to protest the incarceration of six village defense volunteers who gave their government issued weapons to the separatist group. It was later discovered that many came because they had been told to do so, without knowing anything about the arrests. According to the evidence, the six village defense volunteers initially claimed that the separatist group raided their house in Tak Bai on 12 October and stole the guns; under intense questioning, they admitted they had handed their weapons over to the separatist group. When they were arrested by police they were afraid to tell this version. The protestors at the police station claimed the men were innocent and had been detained unjustly; because of they feared for their safety, especially living with the general climate in southern provinces. Most of the people who came to protest were not concerned for the six detainees; some had been asked to come by friends, others by their village heads or imams for a host of different reasons.

Around 11:00 am some protestors tried to enter the police station but the soldiers fired warning shots. Around 2:15 pm police brought in family members of the detainees to the crowd to reassure the protestors; but the protestors did not believe them because the separatist group convinced them it was not true. Around 3:00 pm some of protestors tried to break through the police barrier. At this point the police and soldiers shot tear gas and water cannon into the crowd while some protesters began to throw rocks, bricks and bottles at the police and soldiers. Then the soldiers ordered them to lie face down on the ground and allowed women and children to leave. The soldiers told the protesters to remove their shirts and belts, and tied their hands behind their backs and loaded them into an Army truck to be taken to Inkayuth Army Base in Pattani for questioning. There were 1,300 men stacked in trucks traveling a distance of about 150km, but the trucks drove slowly and took 4 hours on the way; the protestors on the bottom layers of the trucks had difficulty breathing and when the trucks had arrived at Inkaguth, 78 protestors were dead, mostly of asphyxiation¹¹.

Evidence shows that the protesters had not organized spontaneously, as many of them came from another province. Looking at video of the protest, shows 20-30 men with their head wrapped in shirts, or kafiya style, controlling and signaling the protesters. It is possible that the separatist group organized the protests in the hope of provoking a crackdown that would embarrass the government and attract international attention. This objective succeeded because it was big new event among the international community.

Many questioned about why 78 protesters had died. It displayed a weak point of the military and police commanders who were responsible in the situation. So, the Prime Minister ordered an investigation of the deaths on 6 march 2005 resulting in the Fourth Army Regional commander and military commander who were in charge of the transportation were removed from their positions after being found guilty of negligence resulting in the deaths of 78 protesters. April 2005 had three bombings in Songkla province with two people dead and 66 injured. On July 19, 2005 Thai government enacted emergency powers since then; several human rights organizations have expressed their concerns that these new powers might be used to violate civil rights.

On September 1 Thai insurgents crossed in to Malaysia to seek refuge. The Thai government has asked Malaysia to return these Thai citizens but Malaysia has refused on humanitarian grounds. In 2006 January 7, 2 border policemen were shoot at the market in Yala Province by 4 militants.

On June 5, 2006 former Prime Minister Anond Panyarachun, chairman of the national reconciliation commission, recommended:

- Introducing Islamic law in Muslim areas
- Making ethnic Pattani-Malay (Yawi) as a working language in the region
- Establishing an unarmed peacekeeping force
- Establishing a peaceful strategic administrative center for the southern border provinces

The recommendations were vigorously opposed by Prem Tinsulanon the president of King's Privy Council. On August 31, 2006, 22 commercial banks were simultaneously bombed in Yala province. One retired military officer was killed and 24 people wounded. On September 16, 2006 six remotely detonated motorcycles bombs simultaneously exploded in the city of Hat Yai, with 4 people dead and 60 people wounded. A Canadian and Malaysian were among the dead. As of September 2006, more than 1400 people have died in less than three years of southern violence. Most have been innocent bystanders, both Buddhists and Muslims.¹²

After the September 2006 Coup

Following the September 19 Military coup that overthrew the Thaksin government, the violence continued on September 21, 2 villagers were shot in Yala, One dying on September 23, 4 policemen were injured at the bus stop explosion in Pattani. The bus stop was on the way that would be passed by the motorcade of the crown prince that afternoon. On September 25, 2 police stations and a military outpost were attacked by 30 gunmen in Yala, with two dead and one injured. On September 27 gunmen killed a grocer and two of his customers in Muang district of Yala and travelers on the bus from Yala to Pattani. On September 28, a teacher protection unit in Songai Padi district of Narathiwat was ambushed by a bomb attack, 4 soldiers injuring 1 dead. On November 9, 8 car and motorcycle showrooms were bombed a in Yala, injuring 13¹³

Post–Coup Reorganization

Junta chairman Sonthi Boonyaratglin announced that the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC) and the Civilian – Police- Military task force (CPM) 43 would be revived. The Army- led multi agency Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command would be dissolved and its troops would come under the CPM 43, which would operate in parallel with the SBPAC. The SBPAC and CPM 43 had been dissolved in mid 2001 by former Prime Minister Thaksin. Prior to that, CPM 43 was under the directive of the SBPAC. Sonthi also made himself head of the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC). Previously, the ISOC had been headed by the prime minister¹⁴. On New Year's Day there was a motor explosion in Bangkok but analysis showed it had nothing to do in the south. It might concern the political discrediting of the military government¹⁵.

Cause of the Problem

The situation in south Thailand is very complicated. The problem comes from historical, social, and political issues, exacerbated by poverty and under-development. Economics is also speeding up this issue with Islamic radical thinking wide spread in the world and some insurgents came because the Thai government sent their troops to support the US-led war in Iraq, which created an angry reaction among Malay Muslims and Muslim populations around the world.

Consider From History

In the past, Pattani was included as a part of Malaysia. Pattani is one of the most important areas due to access of economies with the Indian and European merchants. There

were many natural resources such as wood, tin, silk and ivory. During the Ayutthaya kingdom, in 1909, Pattani was reinforced by an Anglo-Siamese formal agreement between Thailand and Malaysia that drew a border between Pattani and Malaysia. Then Pattani divided them into three provinces, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Thai let Pattani develop independent political, economic and cultural structures. The sultan of Pattani was required to send gold and silver to the Thai king as symbols of loyalty and troops when requested during war. Although Pattani was a colony, it wanted to be independent. When Thai control was weak, Pattani would fight against the government and cut off ties. Almost all of the people in the three provinces are Muslims and speak Malay, rather than Thai. Thailand tries to accept the three provinces completely as a member of a group, but some of the changes policies began to create an emotion and sense that the Islamic culture was under attack. The Muslim children must go to religious boarding school called Ponoh. The principal of school is called Tok Guru. This school is one source of the resistance. In 1921, the new law of education required that all children must go to state primary schools for four years to learn Thai language. This made the Ponohs feel that the Thai government attempted to turn Muslim Malays into Thais. After World War II, in August 1945, Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis rejoined Malaysia, though not Pattani. The Muslim leadership is hope for a return of these territories was gone. Some Muslims moved to northern Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. So the Thai government tried to let them have an opportunity to include their thinking in politics, and attempted to make friends between Thai Buddhist and Thai Muslim. Thai Muslims established an Islamic council for self-rule, but it was not acceptable to the Thai government. The seven demands were:

1. The appointment of a single individual with full powers to govern the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, and in particular having authority to dismiss, suspend, or replace all government servants – this official is to have been born in one of the four provinces and elected by the people;
2. 80 percent of government servants in the four provinces to be Muslims;
3. Both Malay and Thai to be official languages;
4. Malay to be the medium of instruction in primary school;
5. Islamic law to be recognized and enforced in a separate court other than a civil court where the fakir (non-believer) sat as an assessor;
6. All revenue and income derived from the four provinces to be utilized within them; and
7. The formation of a Muslim board having full powers to direct all Muslim officers under the supreme head of state mentioned¹⁶.

Until the UN came to oversee the accession of Pattani, the Thai government allowed them to use some forms of Muslim self-rule. They sometimes broke the rules of the relationship between the Thai government and Muslim provinces by boycotting meetings and the elections.

Over 60 armed groups were operating in the south in the late 1960s, some political, some criminal, some a mixture. The first group, BNPP (Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani) was established in 1959. They called for full independence. They supported Muslim children learning Malay and encouraged Pattani Malays to apply for Malaysian citizenship that made it easier to operate on both sides of the border. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Barisan Revolution National (BRN) maintained close relationships with the communist parties of Malaysia and Thailand, whose goal was to destabilize the border area it shared. This cooperation alienated some of its more conservative supporters in Malaysia and the Middle East. BRN's efforts to span socialism, Islamism, and nationalism made it particularly vulnerable to factional splits. A third armed group, the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), emerged in 1968 and became the largest and most effective of the separatist movements during two decades. PULO was committed to raising education levels and political consciousness in the south. Many fighters were also foreign-trained. The PULO ran training programs for members, and PULO also had a training camp in Syria, along the border with Lebanon. The top military commander received military and explosives training in the Middle East. For most of the twentieth century, relations between Bangkok and the three southern provinces became more serious. Today there is in fact an increase in daily bombing and killing. The increase of violence is attributed strictly to the religion of Islam in three southern Thailand provinces¹⁷.

From Globalizations, Religion, Social, and Politics

First of all we should understand the big picture of the situation about Islamic radical thinking in the world that can be categorized by the following:

1. The Belief System and the Basic Thinking of the Radical Islamic Group.
 - a. General Thinking about Islam Religion

Islam purports to be the most important religion of the world. Allah is God and the Holy Koran is similar to the constitution because it is God's word. Islamists must trust Allah and study the Koran; if they believe Allah and follow the Koran they are a good Islamic people and when they die they are going to be close to Allah in heaven; but some verses in the Koran teach people to use aggressive tactics or radical means of fighting. Islam believes the states came from Allah. So the government must follow Allah and have to rule the people by the Koran.

b. The Basic Thinking of Islam Radical Group (Islamic Fundamentalists)

The basic believe of Islam is the state came from Allah and sovereignty belongs to Allah. The Islamic radical groups strongly believe in this way. They deny any adjustment to the Koran in an unstable environment, especially modernization. Most of countries in the world rule their country by devices that separate religion from the state, but the Islamic fundamentalists want to rule their country in the conservative way. The Islamic radical groups deny free thinking, women's equality, individualism, and pluralism. They use the words from the Koran to be their reason in action or operations around the world and they look at the USA and allies like a great Satan.

c. Thinking in Jihad

In the early times, Jihad meant a struggle for spreading Islam around the world. In the medieval doctrine, Jihad meant struggle for the defeat non-Muslims and establishing the leader by Islamic law. Normally the Islamic leader is called "Caliph"; he can declare a Jihad, but the new Islamic states are secular, and states don't have a Caliph. In this power vacuum the radical groups such as al Qaeda or Hamas had declared Jihad; some say they wrongly translate the Koran to their own benefit. In south East Asia some Islamic groves mistakenly believe that if they make Jihad with non-Muslim during fighting, nobody can see and shoot him, that is, he is invisible. But in general, the meaning of Jihad is to combat the self, combat for spreading Islam, and combat with bad Islam.

d. Thinking in Ummah

Ummah is social aspect of Islam, and it is community and political life of Islam. It is a unity of the Islamic world because they believe that Islam cannot stand alone. Islam should be a unity religion, and not allow a nation or race to be an obstacle. Ummah is centralization of power. This was the thinking during the Ottoman Empire period. After the Ottoman collapse, the Ummah system collapsed, also. The Islamic radical groups have new idea, in that every Islamic person should rebuild the Ummah system because they have the same Allah and same belief.

e. The Thinker of Radical Islam

Ibn Taymiyya one of the philosophers said, the Muslim leaders who don't follow the Koran are unbelievers, and so pure Islam should negate them by militant Jihad. In 1928, the Muslim brotherhood was established in Egypt. They had an

anti-government view because the West had supported their government. They don't need the West. They want to expel Western culture because in Middle East Western culture quickly spread. They saw Western culture as bad because they understand the core value of those cultures respected only modernization; they see Western culture as a selfish and money loving culture. Muslim brotherhood resisted Western culture, and any Muslim leader who was supported by the USA, the Muslim brotherhood want to guide Muslim people to kill Western people and their interests everywhere in the world. Al- Qaeda, led by Bin laden followed on this way. He believes that he must fight with everybody who doesn't honor Islam. They want to fight for Allah. They believe if they die by fighting, it is the most honors for them.

2. Case of Islamic Radical Group Wide Spread

a. Role of Powerful Country

During the cold war period, the USA and USSR both had supported terror groups in the third world. USSR supported by establishing terror schools and supporting study in university for Muslims who went to an anti-western country. In 1979 the USSR attacked Afghanistan, so the image of USSR in Middle East had change. The USA take this opportunity to support the Mujiahhidin to fight a Jihad with the USSR; at that time the warriors from the Middle east and radical Islamists in every part of the world supported Mujiahhidin until they defeated the USSR. After that, most of radical warriors thought they didn't need USA either, since Jihad must be Islamic only. When the USA became the only powerful country and declared a new world order, the effects of their policy made many countries uncomfortable because those countries feel like moral blackmail. If those countries don't follow new world order policy, they have to survive economic sanctions by the USA. The new world order policy made the Islamic world and radical Islam angry, because radical Islam is against democratic rule. They want to rule their country by Islamic law and in every dimension of Islamic life.

In 1991 the USA entered the gulf war and stationed their military in Saudi Arabia. The radical Islamic group was further angers, because they said Saudi Arabia is the land of Allah. They can't accept this presence. After 2001 the USA now has military forces stationed in Middle East, Central Asia and East Europe in more than 38 countries. The image of the USA in Muslim countries is negative and

they see the USA as the threat. The new world order policy lacks the support by Islamic countries. They are also attacking Muslim Groups and governments who are not radical, in Egypt, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia. Their Jihad is not just anti Western but anti moderate Muslim too, meanwhile some Islamic countries do support radical terror groups. The main policy of radical Islam is tried to force USA out of the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

b. Role of Middle East countries

Egypt is an original country of radical Islam, and had exported Islamic warriors to Afghanistan. In Egypt they have two radical organizations, the Muslim Brotherhood and The Islamic Association, both of them strongly anti-western. They even oppose the Egyptian government, if they follow the USA or western cultures. This idea has spread rapidly other Muslim countries in the world. At the same time, Saudi Arabia provided monetary support to fundamentalist groups in south Asia to establish Islamic states; the International Islamic relief organization in Saudi Arabia supported money to develop religious schools in southern part of Thailand. In 1996 the Taliban established a government in Afghanistan and coordinated with al Qaeda to conduct an international Jihad. Afghanistan has the same school of terror that came from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia; these schools follow Bin laden's theory.

3. Radical Islam in Southeast Asia

Normally, Islamists in Southeast Asia are active in moderate ways and adjusted well in the Buddhist environment, even if they had radical thinking; the only have conflict with their government was with economic, political or social problems. But, in the past decade, they changed and have a new revolution because of radical thinking from the Middle East and sometimes they are supported by international terrorism. Some students from Southeast Asia went to the Middle East to study religion and military doctrine; they got the idea from radical Islamists to be anti-USA and western countries. The student who studies in the Middle East learned of the outcome of Mujahidin operations; they are impressed and feel like the Mujiahhidin are their heroes. After the Afghanistan battles, Muslim warriors that are from many countries continue to coordinate and feel like most of them are part of a brotherhood. This is a key point to make: radical Islamic thinking has spread to Southeast Asia and this movement has spread in Southeast Asia too, while at the same time they want to fight to establish an Islamic state in Southeast Asia. Jama Islamiya (JI) coordinates with Al Qaeda and the primary

school in the south. They teach only religion and most of the Imams used to study in Afghanistan and Pakistan; when they return to Thailand they brought back radical ideas from the Mujiahhidin and they spread these ideas in religious schools in Southern Thailand.

4. How does the Network of Radical Groups get Money to Support their Activities in South Thailand?

The terrorists want money to persuade some people to join with them, buy weapons and to use in administration. Normally a terrorist group joins with a criminal group, performing country and transnational crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Another way they get money is by donations from people who belong to the same religion, same believing, same thinking and same ideology. Sometimes they get money by social organizations. Some money comes from their businesses, such as Bin laden's. Many organizations get money donations by rich people from Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia, but the easy way to get money from people in local area is via donations of followers of Islam religion, known as zakat. In another tactic, a radical group in southern Thailand sent their members to work in 17 Islamic countries in Asia and the Middle East to get money from donations by telling those countries that the Thai government doesn't take care of Muslim people in the south because they are a minority group. The Muslim people in southern part of Thailand have big differences in culture; they can't speak Thai language and dress differently. The officials who work in the southern don't have exhibit the same quality of most of Thai government, since most officials don't want to work in south. The Thai government support budget for development infrastructure is less than other parts of the country, and the government administration is not as efficient. The education system most of elementary school and middle school in three provinces in the south don't study in Thai language, they study only Islam taught by an imam; when children graduate from school, most of them can't continue study in college or university. So, it is impossible for them to get work. When people don't have a job, especially the youth, it means the country has a big social problem. It is very easy to persuade those young people to make mayhem by giving them some money; and it is very easy to point out how well they take care of them as opposed to the Thai government. Meanwhile, during school the imam introduced them to radical Islamic thought for Allah and for to be a good Islamist. So dividing the country and self-rule is easy to create in the current situation¹⁸.

Recommendations to Solve the Problem

- We must teach the Muslims the really right way of their religion vice being inclined to be radical. The radical men always use the incorrect facts of the religion for the justification and create risk to the insurgency.
- Working together with the world's countries to boycott the insurgency. Many social groups are tuning to non-state actors for justice; they use indirect military operations and they can execute operations across countries without blockades of border security. This means only one nation can't solve terrorism. Every country must work in close coordination each other.
- Before sending students to go and study in the Middle East, Thailand should have an efficient system that selects or recruits students to study in a good university. Also, Thailand should have an efficient system to recruit Imams and the curricula should be composed of many subjects to include science, math, sociology, and politics.
- Thailand should destroy the line of money support, even though it is difficult because it is too complex; many countries try to do the same thing, but they can't, because the terrorist group gets money from many social organizations operating under the law. In the short term, Thailand should close these organizations, arrest people who support these organizations, and in the long term Thailand should have an efficient law to enforce against these organizations. And the last thing is to destroy the radical ideology; open their minds and their worldview.
- The Thai government should use this time that they declared martial law to quickly reorganize many social structures in the south and set up efficient systems to monitor those social organizations on how they use the money to prevent support for radical Islam in the south.
- As a last resort, if the situation does not improve, is to let Pattani become semi-autonomous. The Pattani people can elect all Pattani leaders; while the central government controls local ministries (police, health, education, etc.) and makes sure all utilities provide service (electricity, sewer, water, trash removal). The Thai government will still defend the southern border. Pattani will use the Thai Baht and Thai passport, official documents will be in Thai and Yawi language, secular Thai law, not Islamic law, some taxes from Pattani contribute to national treasure, but most stay in Pattani. Thai national education standards should be met, and send Pattani men and women in the Army to all areas of Thailand. This will expose them to the world beyond Pattani, and increase their sense of being part of Thailand.

Keep the mix of Thais and Muslims in 4th Army area in Pattani to expose Thais to the Muslim people.

Conclusion

The causes of insurgencies in southern Thailand are complicated; the most outstanding causes come from religion and culture. Most of the people of the three provinces in the southern part of country are poor and uneducated. They have a different culture, customs and language. So it is easy for the separatist groups to guide and persuade these people to join the movement. Most of the separatists are young men aged 15-20 led by 35-40 year old men and sponsored by drug dealers or a person who aspires to be a state leader, and also those alienated from globalization by Islamic radical thinking. They usually provide monetary and ideological support to these youngsters to persuade them. Investments and tourism in the southern part of Thailand are affected by these incidents. There are also social and emotional impacts on people which in turn cause internal conflicts within the country. The Thailand government tries to solve these problems by setting up many projects and gives more money for the people in the three provinces. They reorganized the official system, for example, education, and focused on vocational training. A bilingual project of Thai and Yawi was imposed. The government officials who are going to work in the south must study the local culture and Yawi language.

The foreign minister visited the Islamic countries to better the situation and many of them realize that it is not a religious conflict, but the separatist groups try to make it into a religious conflict. And the government has invited OIC (Organization of Islamic Conferences) to visit the three provinces in the south. After visiting, they understood and gave confirmation to OIC not to support the separatist movement.

The insurgency in the three provinces in the southern part of Thailand has existed for a long time. So, to fight this problem is very difficult in such a short time. The government should have a short, middle and long term plan. They should reorganize the government system not only in the southern part but also in all parts of the country. Every organization must work with each other because one organization can't solve this problem alone. The government must better the situation and try to make people in the country understand the situation and the same is applied to other countries involved. The most important thing is to contain the problems in Thailand and try to solve them by ourselves and close continued relationship by joint information or new knowledge about terrorism and Islamic radical group with their allies.

Endnotes

- ¹ The world fact book: Thailand available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/th.htm/> 6/5/2006
- ² Thai Army Military intelligence Headquarter, Bangkok
- ³ <http://www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/em936.cfm>
- ⁴ South Thailand insurgency, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 6/1/2006 Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/south_Thailand_insurgency 6/5/2006, hereafter, "South Thailand Insurgency"
- ⁵ South Thailand Insurgency
- ⁶ Thai Army Military intelligence Headquarters, Bangkok, personal experience
- ⁷ South Thailand Insurgency
- ⁸ Thai Army Military intelligence Headquarter, Bangkok, personal experience
- ⁹ South Thailand Insurgency
- ¹⁰ Supoh is one ceremony in the Islamic religion; People who join in these ceremonies must highly regard Allah and be highly discipline, also they must be ready to die for Allah.
- ¹¹ South Thailand Insurgency
- ¹² South Thailand Insurgency
- ¹³ LT. Arak Ruengtara 31st infantry regiment medical platoon commander in operation position, interview (Feb 15, 2007)
- ¹⁴ Col. Aumnat Pooksisuk, Strategy Faculty, Thai War College interview (Feb 27, 2007)
- ¹⁵ Col. Sopol Sirigkam, Strategy Faculty, Joint Thai Arm Forces College interview (March 4, 2007)
- ¹⁶ Jan Mc Girk, Thailand's endemic insurgency, 28 -11-2005 Available from http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy_protest/thailand_3069.jsp
- ¹⁷ Pattani history available from www.pattani.go.th/saratourpai/prawat/pattani.htm_22k.
- ¹⁸ Pattani history available from www.geocities.com/tain94pao/historypattani.htm_26k_supplement Result.

